

REMARKS

Upon entry of this amendment, claims 7-9, 13 and 14 are all the claims pending in the application. Claims 1-6, 10-12 and 15 are canceled by this amendment.

I. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

A. The Examiner has rejected claims 1-6, 11, 12, 14 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Dubin et al. (US 5,972,192) in view of Reid et al. (US 6,716,334), Landau (US 6,261,433) and Erb (US 6,107,186).

As noted above, claims 1-6, 11, 12 and 15 have been cancelled by this amendment. Regarding claim 14, Applicants note that this claim depends from independent claim 7, and that claim 7 was not rejected based on the above-noted combination of references. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the rejection of claim 14 should be withdrawn.

B. The Examiner has rejected claims 7-9 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Reid et al. (US 6,716,334) in view of Landau (US 6,261,433) and Hymes (US 6,423,200).

Applicants submit that the Hymes reference (US 6,423,200) is not prior art against this application because its filing date of September 30, 1999 is subsequent to the application's priority date of April 1, 1999. Accompanying this Amendment is a verified English translation of Japanese Patent Application No. 11-94943 filed on April 1, 1999, to which priority is claimed, thereby perfecting the priority date of April 1, 1999.

Accordingly, as the Hymes reference does not qualify as prior art against the present application, Applicants respectfully submit that the above-noted rejection of claims 7-9 should be withdrawn.

C. The Examiner has rejected claim 10 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dubin et al. (US 5,972,192) in view of Reid et al. (US 6,716,334), Landau (US 6,261,433) and Erb (US 6,107,186), and further in view of Yamakawa et al. (US 4,906,341).

As noted above, claim 10 has been canceled by this amendment, thereby rendering this rejection moot.

D. The Examiner has rejected claim 13 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Reid et al. (US 6,716,334) in view of Landau (US 6,261,433), and further in view of Yamakawa et al. (US 4,906,341).

Initially, Applicants note that because claim 13 depends from independent claim 7, it is presumed that the Examiner intended to include the Hymes reference (US 6,423,200) in the above-noted rejection of claim 13. As discussed above, the Hymes reference is not prior art against the present application. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the rejection of claim 13 should be withdrawn.

II. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the claims of the present application are in condition for allowance. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may best be resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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